

Parliament has no plan to raise energy prices: *MP*

Economy Desk

Malek Shariati, who is a member of the Parliament's Energy Committee, said on Tuesday that the Iranian legislature has no plan to raise the prices of gasoline and electricity. He also announced that one percent of oil and gas sales will be allocated to optimize energy consumption across the country, ISNA reported. One percent of the revenues obtained from the country's oil and gas exports, as well as 10 percent of the resources gained from the sale of LPG, ethane, and sulfur, should be deposited in the account of Energy optimization and strategic management organization, the lawmaker explained.

The parliamentarian went on to say that in order to solve the energy shortages, attention should be paid to the consumption management along with increasing production.

Criticizing the low efficiency of the power plants in the country, he said due to the supply of free fuel to the power stations, there was no will to increase the efficiency, and now the efficiency of the power plants is not acceptable.

As much as \$30 billion per year is the value of the fuel that is given to the country's power plants, Shariati said, adding that the country must cut a third of the figure in a five-year plan.

Shariati, referring to the plans made for winter fuel supply, stated that there is no concern as liquid fuel reserves are favorable and the officials of the Ministry of Oil are making their efforts to have no problem in supplying gas. "In addition, we must take measures in the field of consumption management."

Regarding the measures taken to import gas from Russia, the MP noted that Iran is after importing 300 million cubic meters of gas from Russia per day, and the two sides are negotiating to implement the agreement through signing a contract which may take a few years.

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad last week ruled out rumors about a government plan to hike gasoline prices.

"The government has no such plans on the table," Paknejad said.

The minister noted that the Oil Ministry's priority was not to raise gasoline prices but rather to "manage fuel demand" and curb consumption.

He added that any decision to increase gasoline prices would need to be taken by the all branches of power, rather than being made unilaterally by the Oil Ministry.

Iran's annual pistachio exports could hit \$2m: *Association head*

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

If the export barriers are removed, Iran can earn \$1.5 to \$2 million by exporting pistachios, as announced by the head of the Iran Pistachio Association. Talking to Iran Daily, Mohammad Salehi said Iranian pistachios are very good in terms of taste and quality, so there are always customers for our produce in the international market.

"Except for Australia and the American countries that supply their needs from the US (the world's largest pistachio producer) due to proximity, all other countries buy pistachios from Iran," he noted.

According to statistics, the US is the largest producer of pistachio with 676,000 tons of annual output, which is approximately 67% of the world's pistachio production, and Iran has the second place with 180,000 tons, equivalent to 18% of the world's pistachio production.

Turkey is in the third place with 120,000 tons (12% of the world's pistachio production), followed by Syria and Greece 10% and 7% of the world's pistachio production, respectively.

Despite having the third place, Turkey is not one of the main exporters because most of the country's pistachio production is consumed in the domestic market, Salehi said, noting that Turkish pistachios are used in the food industry and processing for other products, or are available for tourists visiting the



country.

"Referring to Afghanistan's plan to develop pistachio orchards in the country, he explained, Afghans around Herat region have started to develop many pistachio orchards, and these orchards will be fruitful in the next 10 years. So, in the next 10 years, the country will be one of our rivals in the field of pistachio production and export," the association head noted.

This year, pistachio production in Iran is expected to reach about 170,000 tons, he said adding that last year the corresponding figure stood at about 190,000 tons.

Our export currently

stands at over 140,000 tons as due to strict laws and other obstacles; the country cannot export 25,000 to 30,000 tons of pistachio products, he stated, adding that part of the pistachio output is also used domestically.

Pointing out that the export obstacles are actually related to the sanctions, he added, "According to guidelines on commitments of traders for forex revenues, a ceiling has been set for the amount of exports, in such a way that each exporter is allowed to export, for example, up to a certain level of the export value of a product."

Salehi went on to say that

the trader must first bring the forex gained from the export into the country in order to have the license to export again. "Due to banking problems caused by sanctions, the process of fetching the generated forex takes time and it slows down the export process."

The guidelines on obligations of traders for forex revenues is actually an instruction according to which the exporters of services and goods, in order to enjoy tax exemptions, must return the forex obtained from their exports to the economic cycle of the country in accordance with the regulation.

This requirement introduced by the Iranian government was to compensate for the forex restrictions resulting from the sanctions. As a result, along with the export of various goods, a significant amount of forex enters the country, so the hard currency revenue is among the factors of the growth and prosperity of Iran's economy.

Salehi said China imported 200,000 tons of pistachios last year; 15,000 tons from Iran and 185,000 tons from the US. "Until three years ago, China used to supply 70,000 to 80,000 tons of pistachios from Iran and 50,000 to 60,000

tons from the US, but due to export barriers, the US pistachio output is gradually replacing that of Iranian pistachio in the Chinese market."

In order to solve the problem caused by law on commitments of traders for forex revenues, it is necessary to establish communication between the exporter and the importer. The exporter can sell his forex to the importer outside the country so that the importer can bring in products using the forex. Consequently, the forex will actually enter the country's economy and the problem of the exporters will be solved, Salehi concluded.

Four water desalination units to open in Iran's south



Economy Desk

Four water desalination units to be launched in the southern provinces of Hormuzgan and Bushehr by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2024), announced the managing director of the Water and Waste Organization on Tuesday.

There are 105 water desalination projects

across the country, of which 87 water desalination plants with a total daily capacity of 511,185 cubic meters are in operation, Hashem Amini said, reported IRNA.

Another 18 water desalination units are being built across the country with a capacity of 90,150 cubic meters per day, of which four units in Bushehr and Hormuzgan provinces with a total

capacity of about 25,000 cubic meters per day will enter service by the end of this Iranian year.

In 15 other provinces, the construction of water softening units is on the agenda, and we hope that by allocating the required credits, their construction process will continue at an accelerated pace.

Last year, Iran launched a major project to trans-

fer desalinated water from the Persian Gulf to three provinces in its arid central regions.

The project includes a 730-kilometer pipeline for transferring up to 200 million cubic meters per year of desalinated water to Yazd, Kerman and Isfahan from desalination plants in Sirik, located on the easternmost mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Iran, China hold talks on electrifying Tehran-Mashhad railroad

Iran and China held talks to finance the electrification of Tehran-Mashhad train lines, said Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways Jabar-Ali Zakeri on Tuesday.

Zakeri also called for using a new system in Iranian railways to reduce costs and increase efficiency of trains, ISNA reported. Once completed, the rail route could accommodate

electric trains running at 200 km per hour, traveling between the two cities in six hours.

Tehran-Mashhad, the most frequented railway line of Iran and one of the few double-track lines of the country, with 926Km of length and 50 stations starts from Tehran, and ends in Mashhad in north-eastern of Iran passing through the major cit-

ies of Garmsar, Semnan, Damghan, Shahroud, and Neishabour.

Currently, the highest possible speed on this route is 160 km per hour which will be increased to 200 km per hour after the electrification project is completed. Based on predictions, the railway will carry annually 33 million passengers and 10 million tons of freight by 2032.

Tehran is in negotiations with two Chinese companies to build a 1,100-kilometer-long railway in eastern Iran at a cost of about \$2 billion.

If the talks are successful, the state-run China Railway Engineering Corporation (CREC) and Citic Group will build a rail link from the northwestern city of Mashhad along Iran's eastern border to the port of Cha-



bahar on the Gulf of Oman. The two Chinese companies will carry out the

project on an engineering, procurement and construction basis.